PEACE IN ISLAM

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Peace in Islam

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Introduction

Praise be to Allah, and may His peace and blessings be upon Muhammad, and upon his family and companions, and all those who follow him.

‘Peace in Islam’ is an essay written by Imam Hasan Al-Banna in 1948 in the monthly magazine known as *Shihaab*.

It is the right of the new Muslim generation to have access to the writings of this great reformer; especially on this important topic. The attention of western writers, in particular the orientalists, has been directed at this crucial topic; the majority of them view Islam as a religion which was established and spread by the sword. They are certainly mistaken.

The Imam’s argument in this essay is that Islam is a religion of love and peace, and indeed, the true manifestation of human brotherhood. In an age of violence and instability, this conception of the role of Islam in establishing world peace and human camaraderie, as it did in the past, is needed very much and it is also an inspiring call for mankind.

This book is of two parts, the first part elaborates on the reformist movements in the Islamic World, the causes, then the answer to the question: *Is the Islamic threat- a myth or reality?* Then he describes the Human Brotherhood concept of Islam.

In the second part, the Imam elaborates on Jihad, and why fighting is allowed in Islam. He defines the purposes of war in Islam and answers the commonly asked question: Was Islam spread by the sword? and what steps Islam has taken in terms of guaranteeing peace.

The Imam, may Allah bless him, shows us that ultimately, and insha’ Allah (God-willing) time will be a witness to this, only Islam can save mankind from itself.

Reformist Feeling in the Islamic World

Many political and social analysts as well as scholars, especially those interested in studying the development and evolution of nations, notice that the Islamic world (spearheaded by the Arab world) is pursuing an Islamic path in its fresh resurgence, and this new direction is gaining increasing momentum.

Many writers, thinkers, scholars, and leaders who were advocating conformity with the values of western civilisation and adherence to its norms and the complete adoption of its principles, began rethinking their ideas and started to change their tone and replace it with a new more cautious and wary approach. The call for the return of Muslim society to the fundamentals and teachings of Islam became more powerful, paving the way for the re-islamisation of all aspects of life.

The Causes

It worries the Islamists that the governments and nations of the west have lived for centuries ignorant of Islam, knowing nothing about Islam except fanaticism and stagnation, and viewing the Muslim nations as nothing more than weak societies which can be easily led and conquered. When Islamic revival emerged, they began to analyse and explain this phenomenon according to many frameworks and theories totally alien to the true essence of this religion. Some researchers said that this Islamic resurgence was a result of the rising tide of extremist Islamic tendencies and intolerant Islamic organisations. Others argued that it was a reaction to the political and economic pressures felt by the Islamic nation. Still others saw the cause for the rise of this phenomena as a means by which those who seek power will achieve their desired goal. All these speculations are very far from the truth because this Islamic direction is due to three main developments:

Materialism in the West

The materialist pillars upon which modernity was established achieved an economic and technological advancement, but failed to satisfy human needs and fulfil the conditions of a stable social life. The western way of life which was founded on material knowledge, technical know-how, innovation, invention and the dominance of the world markets with its products, was not able to give the human soul a ray of light, a hint of (spiritual) inspiration or a strand of faith. It was not able to provide any means of peace and tranquillity for anxious souls. This is why it was natural for a man living in these conditions to seek happiness in the purely material world and look for ways of alleviating his suffering in ways consistent with it. Indeed all that western life could offer him

was material pleasure: an excess of wealth, sex and other corrupted vices, with which he temporarily indulges himself, only to find that he is not satisfied. With the decline of family values and the rise of individualism, the modern man, along with the 'modernised' one, felt his soul crying out for freedom from this material prison, searching for a release into the vastness of faith and spiritual light.

The Perfection of Islam

Secondly, and this is the positive aspect, the Islamic thinkers rediscovered the fundamental virtues of Islam and the comprehensiveness of its teachings; and they realised that Islam offers the most detailed, most complete, all-encompassing system compared to all other social philosophies that have ever emerged. For a long time the Muslims had forgotten this fact, but when Allah allowed them to compare the social principles of their religion with what the greatest of social scientists and the most prominent of thinkers have discovered, they found that the difference between the treasures of their great heritage and human attempts of thinkers and philosophers was vast. In light of this, they found themselves responsible for calling all people to this righteous path, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The Course of Modernity

After two destructive world wars, new principles, norms and social systems emerged, shaping the political, social and economic life of various nations. However, it was not long before these new standards were put into question and in some circumstances even abandoned or changed. All this took place at a time when Islamic thinkers were busy theorising, monitoring, weighing and returning to the Holy Book of their Lord, the clear guidance of their Prophet and the bright history of their civilisation. They found that there wasn't a virtue in any worldly system that was not already affirmed by Islam. As for social, economic and political problems, related to these systems, Islam prescribes the route of prevention and cure.

The democratic system led the world for a while, encouraging many intellectuals as well as the masses to think of it as the ideal system. Nobody can ignore the freedom it has secured for peoples and nations alike, and the justice it has introduced to the human mind in allowing it to think freely, and to the human being as a whole in allowing him the freedom to fulfil himself; and, apparently, giving power to the people. Indeed, international relations after the First World War came as a proof of the legitimacy of these ideas and most of the world turned towards them wholeheartedly. However, it was not long before people realised that individuality and unlimited liberty can lead to chaos and many other short-comings, which ultimately led to the fragmentation of the social structure and family systems, and the eventual re-emergence of totalitarianism.

Nazism came to power in Germany, Fascism in Italy and both Hitler and Mussolini began to force their people to conform to what they thought; unity, order, development and power. Certainly, this system led the two countries to stability and a vital international role. This cultivated much hope, reawakened aspiration and united the whole country under one leader.

Then what happened? It became apparent that these seemingly powerful systems were a real disaster. The inspiration and aspirations of the people were shattered and the system of democracy did not lead to the empowerment of the people but to the establishment of chosen tyrants. Eventually after a deadly war in which innumerable men women and children died, these regimes collapsed.

Concurrently, socialism and communism gained adherents. Soviet Russia came onto the scene propagating its ideology and its system, which changed remarkably during thirty years. The democratic/liberal power, or to be more accurate, the old 'colonial' powers (or the new ambitious ones), started thinking very seriously about stopping this rising tide. The struggle between the two powers intensified while the nations and countries not yet aligned to this camp or that, wandered aimlessly, and did not know whether to turn here or there. Among these countries were the Islamic nations.

This social development and seemingly inevitable confrontation reawakened the inspiration of Muslim thinkers which motivated them to start weighing and comparing all the available options and they ended up, after much contemplation, with the final conclusion: the need to pursue the path of freedom independent of all these alien systems, and the absolute necessity for a return to Islam.

The Three systems in Prayer

I once said, humorously, to an audience, "This prayer that we offer five times a day is nothing more than a daily exercise on a practical social system which contains the best of communism and democracy." In total surprise they asked: "How can that be?" I said that the best that the communist system has to offer is its promotion of equality, its attack on social classes, and its war on pride in private ownership upon which class is based. All these elements are present and completely felt by a Muslim when he enters the mosque. For when he first enters the mosque he knows that this holy place belongs to Allah, and Allah alone; and that there is no difference between one who finds shelter in it and one who only passes through. In it there is no young or old, no lord or slave and no discrimination nor classification.

When the *Mu'adhin* intones, "The prayer is due, the prayer is due", the masses line up behind the Imam in one straight line as if they were one solid wall. Nobody bows before the Imam does, and no one prostrates before him. In every little movement the masses are obliged to follow the Imam and not to supersede him in any way. This is the best that any autocracy has to offer - everyone united, orderly and well organised.

However, the Imam does not act as he pleases. On the contrary, he himself is bound by the instructions and constitution of the prayer. If he should divert or make a mistake in a recitation or an action, it is upon the young boy, the old man and the women who prays behind him to correct his short-comings. It is their every right to remind him, correct him and guide him to the right path during their prayer. Moreover, it is obligatory on the Imam, whoever he shall be, to bow down to the truth, and correct his mistake in the light of their instructions. There is nothing in democracy that is better than the virtues we have just cited.

Hence, what is in these man-made systems that elevates them above Islam when Islam has so marvellously blended the best of them together, to come up with one complete system?

'Indeed, if it was from any other than Allah then they would have found in it many contradictions'

(Surat-al-Nisaa' (4), ayah 82)

The Islamic Threat- Myth or Reality?

Westerners, as I mentioned earlier, are very concerned with this new Islamic movement and see it as an eminent danger. Hostility and an attitude of confrontation is the reaction that has formed. For, they see it as nothing more than the victory of the old regressive traditions, and the coming together of the 'barbarians' against the new civilised world. This is a profound illusion and a grave mistake, as well as being a misconception of evident truth. It is our purpose in writing the following words to make two important points:

i) To prove the idea of the fundamentals of the Islamic social system, and its superior status among the other systems that have recently emerged. Among these fundamentals of Islam are:

1- Human brotherhood and the abolishment of the spirit of hatred and rigidity.

2- Peace and the real purpose and philosophy of Jihad that many orientalists ignored or were ignorant of.

3- Freedom and the Islamic position and principles regarding slavery and liberty.

4- Social justice: and an explanation therein of the Islamic point of view on the system of government and social stratification.

5- The "good life"; its meaning and realisation..

6- The family; the rights of women, polygamy and divorce.

7- Work and earning; the different means of earning money and the real meaning of *Tawakkul*.

8- Knowledge: and in it an exposition of the errors committed by those who accuse Islam of encouraging ignorance and stagnation.

9- Organisation: in it an explanation and a reply to those who think that lack of discipline and order are inherent in Islam.

10- Religiousness: and in it there is the truth of faith in Allah, virtue and reward.

ii) To argue that the good of all humanity is in the return of Muslims to their religion and that this will be the most important step towards peace on earth. Also, one must realise that the motive of that revival is not blind fanaticism but rather conviction in what the virtues of Islam have brought to mankind. These are the virtues that conform totally with the highest of what contemporary thought has managed to discover about righteous social principles and the pillars upon which they stand.

Declaring Human Brotherhood and Bringing Glad Tidings of the Universal Idea

Islam came to announce human brotherhood and give glad tidings of a call to universality, to eradicate all forms of discrimination, and to establish this noble system using all the practical and theoretical means at its disposal.

Reaffirming Racial and Ethnic Unity

Islam has reaffirmed the racial and ethnic unity of all mankind; the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

'For, man is from Adam, and that there is no supremacy of an Arab over a non-Arab and no supremacy of a black man over a red man except in piety'

The wisdom behind dividing people into tribes and nations is nothing more than the creation of variety, so that they may come to meet each other in an atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation, and not for the promotion of hostility and difference. Sharing and caring and competing only for righteous deeds and holy virtue, competing for the benefit of the masses and individuals and seeking the pleasure of Allah who is the Lord of all, and who watches this brotherhood, protects it and calls all his servants to practice and establish it. The Holy Qur'an declares all these meanings very clearly when Allah says:

'O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created His wife (Eve), and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allah through whom you demand mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relation of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah is watching over you.'

(The beginning of Surat-an-Nisaa'(4))

Allah also says:

'O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, That you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is that (believer) who has piety and righteousness.'

(Surat-al-Hujuraat (49), ayah 13)

Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) says in his famous sermon during the farewell pilgrimage:

'Allah has relieved you from the burden of ignorance with its pride in the fathers and the ancestors. You are all from Adam, and Adam is from dust. There is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab, nor between a black man and a red man except in piety"

He also says:

'He who calls to tribalism is not one of us, nor is he who fought for it, nor is he who died for it.' (Abu Dawood).

With this declaration Islam totally forbids racism and tribalism - a trend which is still alive in modern western societies.

Reaffirming the Oneness of Religion

Islam has reaffirmed the oneness of religion in its general principles which assert that the laws of the almighty Allah stand on firm foundations of *Imaan* (faith), righteous, work and brotherhood. Islam also came to remind us all that all of the holy Prophets came with a message from Allah, the High in praise, that all of the heavenly books are revelations from Him and that the believers, regardless of their background, are His righteous servants deserving of honour in this life and the hereafter. Islam tells us that disunity, fragmentation and hostility in the name of religion are a sin totally inconsistent with its teachings and beliefs. The duty of humanity, therefore, is to adopt this religion and unite under it. This is the one true path and the natural way for mankind. In this regard Allah says in the glorious Qur'an:

'He (Allah) has ordained for you the same religion (Islam) which he ordained for Noah, and that which we inspired in you (O Muhammad), and that which we ordained for Abraham, Moses and Jesus, saying you should establish religion, and make no divisions in it.'

(Surat-al-Shuraa (43), ayah 15)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) says:

'My likeness and that of the other Prophets before me is as the likeness of a man who built a house and did so with great perfection, except for a gap in one corner, which he left unfilled. This caused much surprise among the people who kept commenting, "Would it not have been better if you would have put a brick in this empty space?". It is I who am that missing brick and it is I who am the seal of all the Prophets.' (Bukhari, Muslim)

Islam has shown us an unprecedented route in its attempt to unite religions. For it is obligatory upon a believer to believe in all the Prophets that preceded Muhammad (PBUH), and every book that came before the Holy Qur'an. To respect every law before Islam, and to praise every nation of believers that existed in the past. The Holy Qur'an orders this and ordained it for the Prophet and his companions:

'Say (O Muslims), "We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Ibraaheem, Ismaa'eel, Ishaaq, Ya'qub, and to Al-Asbat, and that which has been given to the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and to Him we have submitted.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 136)

The Qur'an then follows this by declaring that this is truly the route to unity. That if the peoples of other religions had faith in this then they would be among those who are guided, and if they reject this straight path then surely they will drown in the darkness of difference and conflict. Allah (SWT) says:

'So if they believe in the like of that which you believe, then they are rightly guided, but if they turn away, then they are in opposition. So Allah will suffice you against them. And He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 137)

Allah also supports this unity among the religious and the believing people on two clear bases, that only the arrogant would contest: First- accepting Abraham as the father of all Abrahamic religions. Abraham is without doubt the source of the three famous Prophets whose messages became widely known and followed. These great Prophets are Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon them all). Secondly - the stripping away of all subjectivity and self desire from religion and the referral to Allah as the ultimate authority. One reads in Surat-al-Baqarah :

'And who turns away from the religion of Abraham (i.e. Islamic Monotheism) except

him who befools himself? Truly, We chose him in this world and verily, in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous.'

'Our Sibghah (religion) is the Sibghah (religion) of Allah (Islam) and which Sibghah (religion) can be better than Allah's? And we are His worshipers.'

Later, Allah (SWT) says:

'That was a nation who has passed away. They shall receive the reward of what they earned. And you will not be asked of what they used to do.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayahs 130-141)

The Holy Qur'an adulates all of the Prophets. He (Allah) talks of Moses:

'He was honourable in the sight of Allah'

(Surat-al-Ahzaab (33), ayah 69).

And describes Jesus as:

'..the son of Mary, held in honour in this life and the hereafter, and will be one of those who are near to Allah.'

(Surat-aal-Imraan (3), ayah 45)

And:

'His mother a righteous women.'

(Surat-al-Maa'idah (5) ayah 75)

honoured by the angles:

'And (remember) when the angels said: "O Mary! Indeed, Allah has chosen you, purified you (from polytheism and disbelief), and chosen you above the women of man kind."'

(Surat-aal-Imran (3), ayah 42)

Allah also talks about his previous books with great praise. He says about the Torah:

'Verily, we have sent the Torah (to Moses), therein was guidance and light...'

(Surat-al-Maa'idah (5) ayah 44)

And about the gospel

'... And we gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirmation of the Torah that had come before it, and a guidance and an admonition for the pious.'

(Surat-al-Maa'idah (5), ayah 46)

They, and the Holy Qur'an are lamps of guidance to mankind:

'It is He who has sent down the Book (the Qur'an) to you (Muhammad) with truth, and confirming what came before it. And He sent down the Torah and Gospel.'

(Surat-aal-Imran (3), ayah 3)

Furthermore, the children of Israel, the nation of Moses, are a good nation so long as they believe and are straight:

'O Children of Israel! Remember My favour which I bestowed upon you and that I preferred you to the mankind and Jinns (of your time-period.)'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 122)

And the followers of Jesus are talked of as upright and virtuous people so long as they are sincere and honest:

'.. And we ordained in the hearts of those who follow him, compassion and mercy...'

(Surat-al-Hadeed, (57) ayah 27).

The relationship of Muslims with people of other convictions is one based on mutual social benefit and the for good of all mankind:

'Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of you homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity. It is only those who fought against you on account of religion, and have driven you out of your homes, and helped to drive you out , Allah forbids you to befriend them. And whosoever will befriend them, then such are the wrong-doers - those who disobey Allah.'

(Surat-al-Mumtahinah (60), ayahs 8-9).

Any debate should only be conducted in a way that is polite and proper - except with those who transgress. Such a discourse is based on reminding one another of the ties between the heavenly messages and the monotheistic unity of faith and conviction:

'And argue not with the people of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians), unless it be in (a way) that is better (with good words and in good manner), except with those who do wrong, and say (to them): "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and that which has been revealed to you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we have submitted."'

(Surat-al-'Ankabut (29), ayah 46).

It is through this that Islam has overcome all sources of conflict, disagreement, hatred and hostility between the believers of different religions, and reminded them all of the need for uniting around the laws of Allah:

'Verily those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear , nor shall they grieve.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 62)

If they shall persist, however, on staying in conflict with one another and seeking a judgement other than Islam, then Islam, its laws and followers accept no responsibility for what they do:

'Verily, those who divide their religion and break up into sects (all kinds of religious sects), you (O Muhammad) have no concern in them in the least. Their affair is only with Allah, Who then will tell them what they used to do. Whoever brings a good deed shall have ten times the like thereof to his credit, and whoever brings an evil deed shall only get the like thereof, and they will not be treated unjustly. Say: "Truly, my Lord has guided me to a straight path, a right religion the religion of Abraham - to believe in One God, and he was not those who worshipped others with Allah." Say: "Verily, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are all for Allah, the Lord of

the worlds."'

(Surat-al-An'aam (6), ayahs 159-163)

Confirming the Oneness of the Message

For this reason, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as a universal Prophet and not a regional one. The Holy Qur'an declares this universality in many verses; one of which is:

'Blessed be He Who sent down the Criterion (of right and wrong) that He may be a Warner to the worlds.'

(Surat-al-Furqaan (25), ayah 1)

And said:

'And we have not sent you except as a giver of glad tidings and a Warner to all mankind, but most of men know not.'

(Surat-Saba' (34), ayah 28)

In Surat-al-A'raaf He says:

'Say (o Muhammad): "O mankind! Surely, I am sent to you as a messenger of Allah - to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He); it is He Who gives life and causes death. So believe In Allah and His messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write; who believes in Allah and His Words [(this Qur'an) the Torah and the Gospel and also Allah's Word: "Be!" - and he was i.e. Jesus-son of Mary], and follow Him so that you may be guided."'

(Surat-al-A'raaf (7), ayah 158)

Prophet Muhammad's message was the final revelation, and he was the seal of all the Prophets. There will be no message after his and no Prophet shall follow him:

'Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of Allah, and the last of the Prophets, And Allah is Ever All-Aware of everything.'

(Surat-al-Ahzaab (33), ayah 40)

Thus, he was given an ever-lasting miracle, which is this Holy Qur'an:

'And verily, it is an honourable respected Book. Falsehood cannot come to it from before it or behind (it was) sent down by the All-wise, Worthy of all praise (Allah)'

(Surat-Fussilat (41), ayahs 41-42).

In the past, many people used to wonder as to how one man, from one nation, can be sent as a messenger to humanity as a whole. But with the coming of this age, an age in which distances have shortened, and communications cover the globe, the interests of the different peoples and nations mixed until they became 'one nation'. An era in which the atmosphere is filled with news allowing the events and affairs of the east to be heard in the west, in which the aspirations of the reformers are concentrated in 'the one world', 'the one system', for 'social security' and for 'world peace'. This, the struggle for world unity, is a great sign and another miracle for the Prophet and the laws of Islam; because it proves the urgent need for a comprehensive system of world government.

The Unity of Rites

Islam is a practical religion. It does not stop at prescribing the theoretical base for this universal unity, but proceeds to detail the means of fulfilling it, and establishes the rites and laws through which to strengthen this idea in the hearts, and consolidate it in society. This is the difference between philosophical approaches to social change and practical reforming programs, or between the philosopher and the reformer. For, the philosopher outlines the theory and the reformer draws the principles of implementation and supervises its execution. This is why Islam is both a theoretical and a practical religion, and upon these tenets the foundation for its rites and laws are built, the rituals through which Islam managed to achieve what it called for in terms of universal humanity and true brotherhood between people regardless of differences in skin colour or national identity. Among these rites are:

Qiblah (direction of prayer): It is an obligation of all believers to direct their faces, hearts and minds, at least five times a day, towards the *Qiblah* (Ka'bah), which was built by Prophet Abraham - the father of all the Prophets (PBUH). Every one of them (the believers) feels the true meaning of brotherhood and the all-encompassing unity between all the people of the world, contained in this noble symbol. Circumbulating the honourable Ka'bah in the pilgrimage is also another means of reaffirming these sentiments. Some of those who have little knowledge in the wisdom and foresight of Islam claim that Islam still carries some of the ignorant pagan ways of the ancient Arabs; and that the seven encirclements of the Ka'bah and the touching of the Black Stone are nothing but manifestations of those old rituals. This is far from the truth. The Muslim, who circles the Ka'bah or touches the black stone, firmly believes that these are but stones, the only significance of which are the deeply symbolic meanings they carry; the promotion of human brotherhood and the advancement of universal unity. It is worth remembering in this regards Allah's words:

'Allah has made the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, an asylum of security for mankind'

(Surat-al-Maa'idah (5), ayah 97)

Symbolism is, in many circumstances, the only language through which to communicate the most delicate and intricate of meanings. These meanings that are impossible for verbal discourse to articulate and phrases to explain: he who glorifies his national flag, knows that in its essence the flag is but a piece of cloth worth nothing, but he realises that it is not the flag that is respected, but the symbolic significance it has that he holds high. This to him embodies the finest of national feelings. By the same logic, the sacred Ka'bah is Allah's flag on this earth, portraying the clearest meanings of brotherhood, and providing a symbol, to the people, for their unity and coming together. Perhaps the most beautiful thing about it is that it was built by Abraham the father of all the Prophets:

'And (remember) when Abraham and (his son) Ismaa'eel were raising the foundations of the house (saying), "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us. Verily! you are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing."'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 127)

The Black stone is a starting point; and at it the pledge with the Lord of the earth and the heavens takes place. A pact for belief, faith, righteous works and loyalty:

"O Lord our faith is in you, not in the stone, and our belief is in your Book, not the myth, our loyalty is in your covenant (Pure monotheism), and the following of the traditions of your Prophet (PBUH), the destroyer of the idols."

So how can this beautiful symbolism be compared to those pagan practises before Islam? The Ka'bah is an ever-standing, ever-lasting figure. Islam has built the holiest and highest values of universality and brotherhood between all the children of Adam:

'And when We made the House a place or resort for mankind and a place of safety. And take you (people) the place of Abraham as a place of prayer, and we commanded Abraham and Ismaa'eel that they should purify My House for those who are Circumbulating it, or staying, or bowing or prostrating themselves (there, in prayer).'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 125).

The Language: Just as Islam has united the *Qiblah,* it has also united the language and declared Arabic to be the language of the Qur'an:

'We Verily, have made it a Qur'an in Arabic, that you may be able to understand (its meanings and its admonitions)'

(Surat-az-Zukhruf (43), ayah 3)

Sociologists confirm that language is one of the strongest binding factors in any society and the easiest way to bring people together. Islam has recognised this fact, and obliged the Believers to use the Arabic language in their payers and all other forms of worship. Hence the Arab nationality is not based on race, but language, and it encompasses all those who come to speak it. Al-Hafidh Ibn Asaakre says that Qais Ibn Mataatiyah came to a study circle, at which Suhaib the Roman and Bilal the Abbysinian were present, and said: "The Aws and Khazraj (two Arab tribes living in Madeenah) have protected this man (meaning the Prophet), what business have they here?" (pointing to the non-Arabs among those present). Muaadh Ibn Jabal stood up, walked to him, grabbed him and took him to the Prophet (PBUH), and explained to the Prophet what this man had said. In great anger the Prophet (PBUH) stood up and walked to the mosque where the prayer was called for by the mu'adhin. Everybody came to the mosque in response to the call. The Prophet said: " O people!, the Lord is One, the religion is one, and being Arab is not by the father or the mother of any of you. It is but a tongue. So whoever speaks it is an Arab."

What better encouragement than this is there to learn the language of the Arabs and spread it among the people so that it becomes the universal 'Esperanto' which ties the whole of humanity together. Some may argue that this is a dream that will never be realised. The answer to this is that: did the spiritual, and moral strength of the companions not realise this dream and will not the conforming to these ways realise it again. Dreams are only dreams when they are accompanied with weakness. The realities of today are the dreams of yesterday, and the dreams of today are the realities of tomorrow. The ideal way should not be ridiculed just because it is deserted by the majority. This is truly the path to unity, "And whoever walks on the right path will reach his destination".

Adhaan (the call to prayer): You hear the loud voice of the mu'adhin calling for prayer every morning, evening, noon, and at the time of sunset: "Allah is great, Allah is great. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is His messenger. Come to prayer. Come to the successful works. God is great, God is great. There is no god but Allah.". Do you see in this call any propagation to ethnic racism, or special attention to a specific group? Nothing except the glorification of Allah and the emphasis on good deeds and obedience; prayer, and guidance through the good example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH.)- the messenger of Allah.

Rights and responsibilities and the manifestations of worship: Absolute equality is the core of Islam in all the duties, responsibilities and manifestations of worship. The whole of the human race is elevated above the rest of the creation:

'And indeed We have honoured the children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with lawful good things, and preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked difference.'

(Surat-al-Israa' (17), ayah 70)

The whole of humanity is called to in this Islamic message. Frequently the Qur'an Starts with the general call of "O Mankind!" showing equality between people in terms of rights and responsibilities. The religious rights, let alone the civil, political, individual, social and economic ones, are affirmed and guaranteed to all alike. There has never existed a nation to which Allah did not send a messenger:

'And there never was a nation but a warner has passed among them.'

(Surat-Faatir (35), ayah 24)

The manifestations of worship and the manner of performing them is shared among all and offered in total

equality. For, they are in prayer as if a solid structure. They are in pilgrimage united as if all possessing one heart. They are all in these great practices as if the teeth of one comb - no master and no servant:

'Verily, the believers are Brothers'

(Surat-al-Hujuraat (49), ayah 10)

The same can be said of other forms of worship.

Reaffirming the Qualities of Mercy, Love, Altruism, and Piety

Islam has supported its theoretical consideration and practical plans with the spreading of the best of human sentiments in the hearts and souls. These feelings of love of the good for mankind and the attitude of altruism, even at the time of need:

'And give they preference over themselves, even though they were in need of that (which they have given). And whosoever is saved from his own covetousness, such are they who will be the successful.'

(Surat-al-Hashr (59), ayah 9)

'And do good. Truly Allah loves the good-doers.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 195)

'We shall not suffer to be lost the reward of anyone who does his (righteous) deeds in the most perfect manner.'

(Surat-al-Kahf (18), ayah 30)

'Verily, Allah enjoins justice and Righteous deeds'

(Surat-an-Nahl (16), ayah 90)

The ordaining of good-deeds is not restricted only to dealings involving other humans, but it extends to include our dealings with animals as well. For, the doors of paradise are opened to he who gives water to the thirsty dog, and hell swallows a women for imprisoning a kitten - not feeding it nor allowing it to even feed itself. Many other examples are narrated in the Hadeeth to the extent that the companions of the Prophet (PBUH.), in utter amazement once said: *"Is it so that in the good treatment of animals there is a reward for us, O Prophet of Allah?"*, *"Yes, in the kind treatment of every 'soft livered' being, there is a reward for you."* (Narrated by Muhammad).

There is no doubt that these compassionate virtues cultivate, the qualities of love and lead one to appreciate the value of universal brotherhood.

The Universal Humanity in Islamic Societies

History tells us that the Islamic society prospered with the implementation of these values in all the generations in which the message of Islam flourished, and where the believers practised it correctly. For instance, at the time of the Prophet, Salmaan the Persian was side by side with Suhaib the Roman next to Bilaal the Abbysinian and with them Abu Bakr the Quraishite, all bound together with the brotherhood of Islam:

'And remember Allah's favour on you, for you were enemies one to another, but he joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren.'

(Surat-aal-Imran (3), ayah 103)

They knew not any of this ethnic racism except on the day when they had no belief in true Islamic teachings and

were surrounded with the evils of blind ignorance.

The World of Today

Following the Second World War, the leaders of the world promised universal brotherhood and called for a unified happy world. One which would be overwhelmed with peace, justice, freedom and prosperity. Have they achieved any of that, or even sincerely tried? And has the United Nations attempted to equate the sons of South Africa, or forced America to overcome discrimination on the basis of colour? Nothing of the sort has been done, and nothing will be done until all souls are cleansed with the pure water of divine revelation, and nourished from the bounties of faith, and become sincere to Islam - the religion of brotherhood, unity, humanity and peace:

'In this, there is a message to a worshipping people. And we have not sent it except as a mercy to the words'

Peace, and Why Fighting is Allowed in Islam

Islam is uncompromisingly a law of peace and a religion of mercy. Only he who is ignorant of its teachings, hostile to its system, or is arrogant enough not to accept clear evidence, will dispute this fact.

The word Islam is itself derived from the word peace (i.e. salaam). And Muslim is the best description of those who believe in this religion:

'It is the religion of your father Abraham. It is He (Allah) Who has named you Muslims both before and in this (the Qur'an), that the Messenger be a witness over you and you be a witness over mankind!'

(Surat-al-Hajj (22), ayah 78)

The essence of this religion is peaceful submission to the Lord of the worlds:

'Yes, but whoever submits his face (himself) to Allah (i.e. follow Allah's Religion of Islamic monotheism) and he is a good-doer, then his reward is with the Lord, on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 112)

'When his Lord said to him, "Submit (ie. Be a Muslim)!" He said, "I have submitted myself to the Lord of the worlds."'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 131)

'"And we were ordered to submit to the Lord of the worlds"'

(Surat-al-An'aam (6), ayah 71)

Even the greetings between Muslims is "May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon you." Prayer itself is concluded with the announcement of peace - once to the right, once to the left and once to the front if there is an Imam in front - as if to greet his brothers after he had left them during the brief moments that he turned completely to Allah.

Furthermore the revelation of the Qur'an brought with it the angels of peace and the night in which it was revealed became a night of peace:

'Verily! We have sent it (this Qur'an) down in the night of Al-Qadr (Decree). And what will make you know what the night of decree is. The night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is better than a thousand months. Therein descend the angels and the Ruh (Jibreel) by Allah's Permission with all Decree, Peace! until the appearance of dawn.'

(Surat-al-Qadr (97), ayahs 1-5)

The servant greets his Lord with no better greeting than the greeting of peace:

'Their greeting on the day they shall meet Him will be: Peace. And He will prepare for them a generous reward.'

(Surat-al-Ahzaab (33), ayah 44)

The Angels will welcome the righteous into paradise with peace*:*

'And the angels shall enter unto them from every gate (saying): "Peace be unto you for that you have persevered in patience! Excellent indeed is the final home!"'

(Surat-ar-Ra'd (13), 23-24)

Paradise is itself a place of peace:

'For them will be the home of peace (paradise) with their Lord. And He will be their Helper and Protector because of what they used to do.'

(Surat-al-An'aam (6), ayah 127)

'Allah calls to the home of peace and guides whom He wills to a Straight path.'

(Surat-Yunus (10), ayah 25)

Allah, the High, the Blessed, has named Himself "Peace":

'He is Allah other than Whom there is none (that has the right to be worshipped) the King, the Holy, the Peace...'

(Surat-al-Hashr (59), ayah 23)

Of course the Muslim would not hesitate to answer this call to peace, and will never reject it.

'But if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and put your trust in Allah. Verily, he is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.'

(Surat-al-Anfal (8), ayah 62)

'And say not to he who seeks to make peace with you, "you are not a believer". Seeking the perishable goods of the worldly life. There are many more profits with Allah.'

(Surat-an-Nisaa' (4), ayah 94)

No religious law or social system has encouraged the establishment of peace in the same way that Islam has done, for Islam has ordered the practise of this great virtue through respect and self-restraint even at the most testing of times such as *Hajj* (pilgrimage). During this sacred time, a pilgrim is strictly prohibited from cutting his nails, shortening his hair, destroying a tree, killing an animal or harming anyone in any way, even if he shall find the killer of his father he is not permitted to hurt him at all:

'So whosoever intends to perform Hajj then he should not have sexual relations (with his/her wife/husband), nor commit sin, nor dispute unjustly during Hajj'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 197)

These prohibitions establish peace within and between the Muslims.

Islam is a Religion of Mercy

Mercy is the companion of peace in the salutation of Muslims.
The Messenger of Islam is a Mercy to the worlds.
And the slogan of Islam, repeated in every utterance and action is
"In The Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful."

The behaviour between the believers is one of patience and mercy:

‘Then he became one of those who believed and recommended one another to perseverance and patience, and (also) recommended one another to piety and compassion.’

(Surat-al-Balad (90), ayah 17)

The verses of the Qur’an and sayings and practices of Muhammad (PBUH.) exemplify the high position of love and mercy.

For example, the gates of paradise were opened, and Allah’s forgiveness and appreciation of Allah was bestowed upon a man who gave water to a dog overcome with thirst. Muslim and others narrate that Abu Hurairah (RA) said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH.) said:

‘While a man was walking he became very thirsty due to the intense heat of the day. To his relief he found a well into which he quickly climbed down to get some water. After he had satisfied his thirst and come back out of the well he found a dog so thirsty that it was eating the earth in an attempt to quench its thirst. He said to himself: "Thirst has overwhelmed this dog to the same extent that it had done me." So he re-entered the well, filled his slipper and held it with his teeth until he got to the top of the well, where he immediately gave it to the dog to drink from. Allah (the exalted) thanked the man for what he had done and forgave him. One of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH.) said: "Is there reward to be gained from being compassionate to the animals?". The Prophet (PBUH.) said: "In every living being there is a reward to be gained"’

Long before any animal rights organisations were founded in the west, compassion towards animals was, and will always be, a characteristic of Islam and the commandment of Muhammad (PBUH.) to every Muslim. Abu Hurairah (RA) said that the Prophet (PBUH.) said:

‘Do not use the backs of your camels as pulpits, for Allah ordained them to take you to places you would only otherwise reach with great suffering, and created the earth for you, so on it carry out your business.’ Narrated by Abu Dawood.

Abdul-Rahman Ibn Abdullah (RA) relates that his father, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

‘While we were on a journey with the Messenger (PBUH.) we saw a Pochard (a type of duck) with two of its chicks. When we took away the chicks the mother started fighting for them back. When the Prophet came and saw what was happening he said: "Who frightened this bird by taking away its chicks? Return its chicks to it immediately". He also noticed that an ant village had been burnt, about which he asked: "Who burnt this?", we said: "It was us!", he said: "It is not for anyone to burn with fire except the Creator of the fire (Allah)"’ Also narrated by Abu-Dawood

Ibn Al-Haakim relates, regarding the life of Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz (the fifth Khalifah of Islam) that he prohibited the riding of horses except for a need, and wrote to Hiyaan, his governor in Egypt, that he had received news that some caravan camels in Egypt were used to carry up to one thousand pounds in weight at a time. He warned Hiyaan that if he (Hiyaan) received his letter, he should not allow a camel to carry more than six hundred pounds. The Fustaat (an ancient village south of Cairo) was named so because during the conquest of Egypt by ‘Amr Ibn Al-‘Aas (RA) a dove built a nest at the top of his tent (Fustaat). When the time to leave the city came, he left the tent exactly where it was so as not to disturb the resident dove. People started building around this tent eventually leading to the growth of the city of Fustaat.

All this is but a small example of the mercy of Islam that can be found within the hearts of the believers. For Islam is indeed a religion of mercy and peace.

But if Islam is a religion of mercy and peace then what is its position towards war and fighting? Was Islam spread with the sword, as those who are hostile to it claim? And is it unique among other religions in allowing fighting, under certain circumstances?

Islam and War

Wars are a social necessity: Civil life in Islam is aimed towards peace. Nevertheless, Islam deals with reality and as long as there are people that follow their own desires and self-interest, there will always be conflict and war. But if war is for the sake of stopping an aggressor, aiding truth and achieving justice, then it is a virtue since it encourages goodness and prosperity for the people. It is a source of evil, social vices and degradation for mankind when it is used as a tool for the wrong-doer, corruption, transgression and oppression of the weak. Islam came to deal with this reality. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

'And if Allah did not check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief. But Allah is full of Bounty to the worlds.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 251)

The All-Mighty also says:

'For had it not been that Allah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, wherein the Name of Allah is mentioned much would surely have been pulled down. Verily Allah will help those who help His (cause).Truly, Allah is All-Strong, All-mighty.'

(Surah Al-Hajj (22), ayah 40)

This shows the Islamic point of view with regards to war - that it is a social necessity or an action from which there is no escape at certain times. <u>An evil that you expect in order to uphold the good.</u>

The purposes of war in Islam: Though Islam acknowledges these realities, it prohibits war, the indulgence in it, the call to it and the encouragement of it, except for justifiable reasons, such as:

i- Resistance of transgression and self-defence as well as defence of family, possessions, nation and religion. In this regard the Holy Qur'an tells us:

'And fight in the Way of Allah those who fight you, but transgress not the limits. Truly, Allah likes not the transgressors.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 190)

The first verse that discussed and permitted war was:

'Permission to fight is given to those, who are fighting because they (believers) have been wronged, and surely, Allah is able to give them (believers) victory. Those who have been expelled from their homes unjustly only because they said: "our Lord is Allah"'

(Surah Al-Hajj (22), ayahs 39-40)

Muslim and An-Nisaa'i narrate that Abu Hurairah said:

'A man came to the Prophet (PBUH.) and said: "O Messenger of Allah! what if my belongings are forcibly taken from me?" The Prophet (PBUH.) said: "Ask for them back in the name of Allah". "If they refuse?", he said. The Prophet replied: "Again, ask for them back in the name of Allah". "If they still refuse?", the man asked. "Ask for

them back, in the name of Allah, yet again", the Prophet stressed. "If they persist in their refusal?", the man inquired. "Fight them, for if you are killed you will enter paradise, and if they are killed they will enter the hell fire." the Prophet explained.'

Abu Dawood, Al-Tirmidhi. Al-Nisaa'i, and Ibn Majah narrate that Sa'd Ibn Yazeed, may Allah be pleased with him said that he heard the Prophet (PBUH.) say:

'Whoever is killed while attempting to protect his belongings is a martyr; whoever is killed while attempting to protect himself is a martyr; whoever is killed while attempting to protect his religion is a martyr; and whoever is killed while attempting to protect his family is a martyr.'

Al-Bukhaari and At-Tirmidhi also narrate that Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Al-Aas, may Allah be pleased with both, said that he heard the Prophet (PBUH.) saying:

'Whosoever has fought for the protection of his belongings until death; he is a martyr.'

ii- The protection of the freedoms of religion and the doctrine of the believers - those whom the disbelievers attempt to divert and mislead. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

'They ask you concerning fighting in the Sacred Months. Say, "Fighting therein is a great (transgression) but a greater (transgression) in the sight of Allah is to prevent mankind from following the Way of Allah, to disbelieve in Him, to prevent access to the Holy Mosque (at Makkah), and to drive out its inhabitants, and Fitnah is worse than killing.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 217)

He also says, in another:

'And fight them until there is no more fitnah (disbelief and worshipping others besides Allah) and (all and every kind of) worship is for Allah. But if they cease, let there be no transgression except against the tyrants.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah, ayah 193.)

iii- The protection of the Islamic call so that it reaches and becomes clear to everyone: Islam is a comprehensive message of social reform founded on the noble principles of truth and goodness; it directs people to these virtues just as Allah says in the Holy Qur'an to his Prophet (PBUH.):

'Verily, we have sent you to all mankind as a warner and a giver of glad tidings.'

Thus, it must remove from its path all sources of hindrance which may delay or prevent the propagation of its message; and the position of every individual and every nation must be clarified with regards to this call. The outcome of this decision would determine the relationship of Islam and its followers with other peoples. The believers are brothers to each other. Those with whom there is a treaty, this treaty will be honoured. Those who are under protection, their protection will be guaranteed. Those who take themselves to be the enemy or are hostile, are warned, and if they correct themselves they will be spared. But if they persist in their tyranny they will be fought, not in an attempt to compel them to accept Islam against their wish but as a tax for their transgression:

'There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 256)

Many verses and Ahaadeeth refer to and explain the above. For example:

'If you (O Muhammad) fear treachery from any people throw back (their covenant) to

them (so as to be) on equal terms. Certainly Allah likes not the treacherous.'

(Surat-al-Anfal (8), ayah 58)

and:

'Let those (believers) who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter fight in the cause of Allah, whosoever fights in the Cause of Allah, and is killed or gets victory, We shall bestow on him a great reward.'

(Surat-an-Nisaa' (4), ayah 74)

and:

'Fight against those who believe not in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth among the people of the Scripture, until they pay the tax with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.'

(Surat-at-Tawbah (9), ayah 29)

and:

'Those who believe, fight in the Cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve, fight in the cause of Satan. So fight you against the followers of Satan: Ever feeble indeed is the plot of Satan.

(Surat-an-Nisaa' (4), ayah 76)

Bukhaari and Muslim narrate that Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH.) said:

'I was ordered to fight people until they bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is his messenger, establish prayer and pay charity, but if they shall do so then they have made their blood prohibited for me and their judgement is with Allah.'

iv- To teach a lesson to those who dishonour a treaty or transgress against the Muslim majority. Allah says in regard to those who reject the just law of equity and reform :

'But if they violate their oaths after their covenant, and attack your religion with disapproval and criticism then fight (you) the leaders of disbelief - surely their oaths are nothing to them-so that they may stop (evil action).'

(Surat-at-Tawbah, ayah 12)

Also Allah says:

'And if two parties or groups among the believers fall into fighting, then make peace between them both, but if one of them rebels against the other, then fight you (all) against the one that which rebels till it complies with the Command of Allah; then if it complies, then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable. Verily Allah loves those who are equitable.'

(Surah Al-Hujuraat (49), ayah 9)

v- Helping the wronged among the believers wherever they be until they gain their rights (humanitarian intervention). Allah the Almighty says in the Qur'an:

'And as to those who believed but did not emigrate you owe no duty of protection to them until they emigrate, but if they seek your help in religion, it is your duty to help them except against a people with whom you have a treaty of mutual alliance, and Allah is the All-See-er of what you do.'

(Surat-al-Anfal (7), ayah 72)

War is strictly forbidden for any other reason

War for purposes other than these humane and beneficial ones is not permissible. This is absolutely clear because Islam follows the word fighting with the phrase "In the cause of Allah". One will not find in any Islamic text the word fighting or *jihad* (struggle) not accompanied by the phrase "in the cause of Allah". This is because Allah has declared the prohibition of all forms of fighting that have an ignoble motive behind them. This prohibition was confirmed by the many Ahaadeeth, and was recorded in the histories and biographies of the followers of the Prophets (PBUH.) - those who did not seek anything with their fighting except the pleasure of the Almighty alone, and the realisation of the aforementioned aims. The Holy Qur'an tells us:

'O you who believe! When you go (to fight) in the Cause of Allah, (verify the truth), and say not to any one who greets you with peace: "You are not a believer"; seeking the perishable goods of worldly life. There is much more profit and booty with Allah. Even as he is now, so were you yourselves before till Allah conferred on you His Favours, therefore, be cautious in discrimination. Allah is Ever Well-Aware of what you do.'

(Surat-an-Nisaa' (4), ayah 94)

'It is not for the Prophet that he should have prisoners of war (and free them with ransom) until he had made a great slaughter (among his enemies) in the land. You desire the good of this world , but Allah desires (for You) the Hereafter. And Allah is All-Mighty, All-wise. Were it not a previous ordainment from Allah, a severe torment would have touched you for what you took.'

(Surat-al-Anfal (8), ayahs 67-68)

Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari said that the Prophet (PBUH.) was asked which among the following is in the Cause of Allah: a man who fights so that he may be called brave, one who fights in revenge or one who fights to be called a good believer by people ? "He who fights for the advancement of the word of Allah is in the Cause of Allah." The Prophet (PBUH.) replied.(Bukhari and Muslim).

Also Abu Dawood narrates that Abu Hurairah said: "A man said to the Messenger of Allah "O Messenger of Allah! A man seeks to struggle in the path of Allah and wants the bounties of this life?" The Prophet said: "For him shall be no reward." The man repeated the same question three times; on each occasion the Prophet giving the same answer- "for him shall be no reward."

The companions of the Prophet (PBUH.), even the Bedouin amongst them, were very affected by this elevated exposition of the objectives of fighting in Islam, to the extent that An-Nisaa'i narrated that Shaddad Ibn Al-Had (RA) said that:

'A man from the Bedouins came to the Prophet, embraced Islam and asked him whether he should emigrate with him (the Prophet). The Prophet subsequently appointed some of his companions to look after him. It was not long afterwards when the Prophet was fighting in one of his battles in which the Muslims won much booty. When the Prophet gave this man his due from this booty, he (the man) said: "It is not for this that I have followed you, but it is to be shot (with an arrow) here (pointing to his throat with an arrow), so that I may enter paradise. He (the Prophet) said: "If you are truthful with Allah, he will give you what you deserve." They then got up and returned to the battle field. Soon, they brought him back to the Prophet (PBUH.) with an arrow through where he had previously pointed. The Prophet said: "is this him?" They answered, "yes." The Prophet said: "He was sincere with Allah and Allah was sincere with him."' Then he was covered with the Prophet's robe and the Prophet prayed over him. Among what was heard from the Prophets prayers for this man was: " O Lord! Verily, this servant of yours emigrated for your sake, and was martyred, and I am a witness to that.'

Islamic History has also recorded many more of these examples of denial of the glories of this life and the spoils of war, and striving for nothing but the elevation of the word of God.

The Preference of Peace, Wherever Possible and its Encouragement

A Muslim only fights when forced to, and after exhausting all peaceful means of reconciliation. If any opportunity of peace arises, then Islam makes it compulsory for the Muslims to take it. A Muslim is also required to extinguish the flame of war whenever and wherever he can. The Qur'an says:

'But if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and (put your) trust in Allah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.'

(Surat-al-Anfal (8), ayah 61)

Abu Dawood narrates that Haarith Ibn Muslim said that his father said:

'The Prophet sent us on an expedition, and we reached the grotto, I prompted my horse thus beating my companions and leaving them behind. I reached the village first and the occupants welcomed me with reverberation and I said to them: Say that there is no God but God and that Muhammad is His Messenger, so they accepted the call of Islam. My friends reproached me for denying them the opportunity of spoils (which they would have had, had these people remained disbelievers). When we went back they related to the Prophet what I had done. Subsequently, he called me to him and praised my actions and said to me: "Allah has given you such and such a reward for every soul amongst them."'

Mercy in War and the Preservation of the Highest Human Morals

If indeed war became essential a Muslim provides the highest example of mercy, virtue and the maintenance of the most noble of human moral principles. For if the scale tilts towards the side of the believers, and they become victorious, then the Qur'an obliges them to restrain themselves from fighting, preserve the prisoners they have taken so that they may offer them, afterwards, their freedom or exchange them for their brothers who have been taken by the enemy; thus doing good to two groups of Allah's servants. In this respect the Qur'an says:

'So when you meet (in fighting), those who disbelieve (and fight you), smite at their necks till you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly. Thereafter (is the time) either for generosity, or ransom, until the war lays down its burden.'

(Surat-Muhammad (47), ayah 4)

As for the slaves, we will talk about them in detail on another occasion. For now it suffices to say that Islam replaced the historical sentence for a captive from capital punishment (death) to life imprisonment. through enslavement. However, Islam has made it very easy for the slave to regain his freedom. Islam does not, in any way permit slavery except in these circumstances.

Furthermore, a Muslim, during the course of his combat does not transgress, corrupt, destroy or steal; nor kill women, children or elderly persons; nor does he follow a deserter (enemy deserter), kill an injured person or mutilate a dead person; neither does he mistreat a prisoner or a man of religion, nor intend to strike any one in the face.

Abu Dawood has narrated that Ibn Mas'ud (RA) said that the messenger of Allah said:

'The most gentle and honourable of those who kill are the follower of the faith'

And Bukhaari relates on the authority of Abdullah Ibn Yazeed Al-Ansaari (RA) that the Prophet (PBUH.):

'Forbade robbery (at the time of war) and the degradation of the dead.'

Abu Dawood narrates that Abu Ya'laa (RA) said that when once we were in a battle with Abdul-Rahman Ibn Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed (RA), four of the elders of the enemy were brought to him. He ordered that they be killed slowly with arrows. When news of this reached Abu Ayoob Al-Ansaari (RA) he said:

'I heard the Prophet (PBUH) prohibit slow killing." : "By He in whose hands is my soul, if it be a chicken I would not subject it to slow death." Immediately subsequent to hearing this, Abdul-Rahman went and freed four slaves.'

The six Imams, except An-Nisaa'i, narrate that Umar (RA) said:

'During one of the Prophets battles, I found a woman that had been killed. In response to this the Prophet prohibited the killing of women and children during war.'

Muslim, Abu Dawood and At-Tirmidhi narrate that Bura'dah (RA) said:

'Whenever the Prophet of Allah briefed one of his army commanders, he reminded him to fear Allah in his actions, and to treat well those believers who are with him. Then the Prophet would tell him to fight in the name of Allah those who turn away from him. Fight and do not exceed your limits, do not transgress and do not kill a child'

This commitment was taken further by all the subsequent khalifahs and amirs; always entrusting the leaders of their armies with it on their conquests. Abu Bakr (RA) commanded Usama (RA) with it when he said:

'Do not deceive, do not dishonour a treaty, do not mutilate the dead; nor should you kill a child, an old man or a woman. Do not destroy palm trees nor burn them, neither are you to cut a fruitful tree, do not kill a lamb, a cow or a camel except for purposes of food. You will come across a people who have devoted themselves to the monasteries; leave them, and what they do.'

Have you seen, anywhere, hearts more tender than these ?

Honouring Pacts and Covenants

If there is a pact, a treaty or a covenant then Islam is strict in commanding that it should be honoured, kept and conformed to in the strictest sense, and warns those who disrespect such treaties in the strongest possible terms. Many verses and ahadith are very clear in this regards:

'And fulfil the covenant of Allah you have covenanted, and break not the oaths after you have confirmed them, and indeed you have appointed Allah your surety. Verily! Allah knows what you do. And be not like her who undoes the thread which she spun after it has become strong, by taking your oaths a means of deception among yourselves, lest one party be more numerous than another. Allah only tests you by this. And on the Day of Resurrection, he will certainly make clear to you that wherein you used to differ.'

(Surat-an-Nahl (16), ayahs 91-92)

'Except those of the polytheists with whom you have a treaty, and who have not subsequently failed you in ought, nor have supported any one against you. So fulfil their treaty to them to the end of their term. Surely Allah loves the pious.'

(Surat-at-Tawbah (9), ayah 4)

'And fulfil (every) covenant. Verily! the covenant, will be questioned about.'

(Surah Al-Israa' (17), ayah 34)

Also Abu Dawood has narrated that Safwan Ibn Saleem said that many of the sons of the companions of the messenger of Allah said that their fathers said that the messenger (PBUH.) said:

'Whoever oversteps or does injustice to whom he has a covenant with, or asked him for what which is beyond his powers, unless the latter does it out of generosity and good will, then I will advocate against the transgressor on the day of judgement.'

The people of Samarqand said to their governor: 'Qutaiba has dishonoured his oath with us, betrayed and wronged us and taken away our country; but Allah has now spread justice and equity, so give us permission to send a convoy from amongst ourselves to the Khalifah (Umar Ibn Abdul-Aziz (RA)) to complain to him about the tyranny that has besieged us and to take back our dues.' He granted them permission, and so they went to Umar. When Umar heard their complaints, he wrote to Sulaiman saying: "The people of Samarqand have complained to me about their unfortunate treatment, and the campaign of Qutaibah against them. If you receive this letter of mine call a judge to look into their case; if he shall rule in their favour then give them back their country, just as they were before. Sulaiman appointed Jamee' Ibn Haadr (RA) as the judge who would consider their case. The Judge ruled that the people of Samarqand return to their land to either reach a peaceful conclusion with him (Qutaibah), or if he refuses this solution to resort to the use of violence to drive him out after warning him in advance. The people said: 'We will agree to our previous agreements and we do not want to enter into war.' They said that they have mixed and lived with (the Muslims) who gave them security. 'Moreover, if we resort to war we know not for whom will be victory, for, if victory does not side with us we would have created more hosility following the conflict.' So they left things as they were and were contented with a peaceful solution and did not fight. This is the highest limit of justice and the honouring of covenants.

Jizyah (Tribute)

We should not like to continue talking about the position of Islam regarding war without first dedicating a few words to the issue of "Tribute", so that we can clarify its meaning, outline the purposes behind it, understand the wisdom behind it and how it is indeed among the virtues of mercy and justice. We say this: Tribute is a tax collected from persons and not the land. The word is Arabic - extracted from Al-jaza (reward) because it is paid as a form of reward for the protection given, or for the exemption granted for the tax of blood and national service. Some people have argued that, in fact, the word has it's origin and root in the Persian word (Kazeet) which means the tax that is used to finance war; and it is said that Kisra (a Persian king) was the first to impose this tax. In this sense they argue that this particular system of taxation was adopted from the Persians and was not invented by Islam.

Islam has decreed the tax of Tribute on the non-Muslims of conquered lands as a reimbursement for the guardianship and protection of their selves and land, and at the same time for exempting them from serving in the army. It is a monetary exchange for their blood-tax. As well as being a means by which Islam and other religions and systems have alleviated some of the burdens from those who pay it by not requiring them to fight with the Muslims, regarding the religious nature of military actions and the definition of 'national interest'. However, if the inhabitants of a country that falls under the rule of Islam do join the Muslim army or undertake the burden of defence by themselves then the tax is dropped. Indeed, many of the regions that were conquered by the Khalifahs of Islam were exempted from paying the tax of tribute for this reason. Letters and treaties written by commanders of Islamic armies are recorded in many books of history today. Among them is:

1) Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed's (RA) letter to Salouba Ibn Nastouna when he entered the Euphrates. This is the actual text of the letter:

'This is a letter from Khalid the son of Waleed to Salouba the son of Nastuona, and his people:

I have promised you my protection in return for your payment of Jizyah. It is upon you to pay Tribute and upon me to protect you (if you do not pay Tribute I will not protect you)." Written in the twelfth year (after Hijrah), in the month of Safar.'

2) In Homs, the governors returned the tax of Tribute back to its people following an order by Abu Obaid (RA). They were commanded to give back the money when they deserted it (Homs) to rejoin the Muslim army who were preparing to fight the Romans. They (the governors) said to the people of Homs:

'We are returning back your dues because news has reached us that a huge army is preparing to fight us. You made it a condition that we protect you in return for your payment of the tax and since we are not able to meet this condition we forfeit the jizyah. But if Allah grants us victory, then we will fulfil the convenants between you

and us.'

The people of Homs replied:

"May Allah return you to us, and give you victory over them, for if it was them they would have returned nothing that they may have taken and kept everything to themselves, your loyalty and justice is by far the more beloved to us than the tyranny and transgression that we were in."

Abu Obaida (RA) did exactly the same with Damascus when he was preparing for the battle of Yarmouk.

3) The treaty between Soweed Ibn Moqrin, one of Umar's army leaders to Rasban, and the people of Dahistan, and all the inhabitants of Jarjan-it reads as follows:

'This is Soweed Ibn Muqrin's letter to Zarban Soul the son of Zarban and the people of Dahistan and the rest of people of Jarjan, that for you is security, and upon us is your protection in return for your payment of Tribute, each according to his ability. And that whosoever's assistance we require will be exempted from the tax in exchange for his efforts, and that your souls, belongings and laws will be protected and none of them will be changed.'

to this bore witness Sawad Ibn Qutba, Hind Ibn Umar, Sammak Ibn Mukhramah and Utbah ibn An-Nahaas, and it was written in the eighteenth year after Hijrah (At-Tabari).

4) The letter of Utbah Ibn-Farqad, one of Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab's governors:

'This is what Utbah Ibn Fareed the agent of Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab has given the people of Azerbijan - its plains, mountains, borders, routes and the people of its religions, that their souls, possessions, religions and laws will be protected in return for the tax of Tribute, each according to his ability. But who ever among them is recruited to the army for a year, he will be exempted for that year, and whoever stays longer, he will be exempted for the length of his service.' (At-Tabari).

5) The treaty that was made between Suraaqah, the son of Umar, governor of Shahr Baraz. Suraaqah wrote to Umar relating to him the details of his letter to Suraaqah. Umar praised him and rewarded him for what he had done. This is the content of that letter:

'This is what Suraaqah Ibn Umar, the agent of the Khalifah of the believers has granted Shahr Baraaz and the inhabitants of Armenia in terms of security: He has granted them security on themselves, their moneys and religion that they shall not be harmed and that the covenant with them will not be dishonoured'

6- Finally, according to Al-Balathari who said that scholars from Intakiah said that the Jarajams (a people from a city on the mountain of Likam at the Ma'dan of Zaj which is between Bayaas and Bouqa called Iajoumah) were loyal to the Romans, and when Abu Ubaidah came to Intakiah and conquered it. They stayed in their city. During the fight between the Muslims and the people of Intakiah who did not fulfil their covenant these Iajoumi refused to fight Muslims. After the victory they accepted Islamic Authority and made alliance with Muslims. They never paid any Jizyah. (The women, elderly and children did not pay Jizya.)

The Emphasis on Continuous Preparation and Utmost Bravery if Fighting Became Necessary

When indeed it becomes necessary that war be declared for any of the humane reasons we mentioned earlier, then Islam is keen to remind us that fighting in the path of Allah is an obligation on every Muslim:

'Fighting is ordained for you though you dislike it, and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good and that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 216)

In this sentence fighting is one of the best virtues with which to gain the pleasure of Allah, the High and the

Blessed, and death in His cause will realise glory in this life and in the hereafter. From this obligation no one is exempt except for those who are incapable of fighting, but they must equip others or guard their families when they are away, if they are able to do so:

'Verily, Allah has purchased of the believers their lives and their property; for the price that theirs shall be paradise. They fought in Allah's Cause, so they kill (others) and are killed. It is a promise in truth which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which you have concluded. That is the supreme success.'

(Surat-at-Tawbah (9), ayah 111)

The Ahaadeeth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are numerous. He (the Prophet) himself participated in more than fifteen battles in which he was a shining example of bravery, courage and boldness, to the extent that the Ali (may Allah honour him) said: "Whenever the heat of battle intensified we used to shield ourselves with the Prophet so that he becomes the closest among us to the enemy." And likewise were his companions. No one will see in commandments and morals, relating to fighting, such as these except the most noble of human virtues and generosity with the self-the utmost of munificence; and truth is most beautiful if it is supported by strength, and strength is finest when used for the truth in fairness.

Was the Call of Islam Spread by the Sword?

The enemies of Islam have, throughout history, accused Islam with this allegation. Indeed Islam has never forced people to believe in it, nor placed swords on their necks to push them to bear witness to what it has born witness to, or submit to its doctrine, in any way. This assertion is very much mistaken for a variety of reasons:

1) It is wrong because history tells us that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH.) lived in Makkah thirteen years calling people to the religion of Islam under much persecution by its occupants at the time. He faced hostility and torture even from his own family and the nearest people to him, nevertheless he persevered and endured the pain of isolation and marginalisation. He used to walk past his companions being tortured saying no more than: "Patience O people for your destination is Paradise." Nevertheless, many of those early believers kept their will and faith. The Ansar, the people of Madeenah, also accepted him as the messenger of Allah following a brief encounter with him during the Hajj season after which a convoy came to offer him their oath of allegiance finally leading to the covenant of Al-Aqabah- the covenant which ultimately lead to the great emigration of the Prophet. In all of this the Prophet did not meet his enemies with the sword, but he used to persevere and be patient with good manners and modesty, saying: "O Lord! Forgive my people for they Know not." The permission to fight was not received from Allah by revelation until the second year after Hijrah, after the enemies of Islam had increased in number and had begun to provoke him and plot against him. Allah sent these verses in which one finds the most magnificent examples of the nobility of purpose, and of the reasons for war:

'Permission to fight is given to those who (i.e. believers against disbelievers), who are being fought because they (believers) have been wronged, and surely, Allah is Able to give them (believers) victory - those who have been expelled from their homes unjustly only because they said: "Our Lord is Allah" - For had it not been that Allah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the Name of Allah is mentioned much would surely have been pulled down. Verily, Allah will help those who help His Cause. Truly, Allah is All-Strong, All-Mighty. Those (Muslim rulers) who, if We give them power in the land, (they) order for the establishment of prayer, to pay charity, and they enjoin goodness and forbid evil. And with Allah rests the end of (all) matters.'

(Surat-al-Hajj (22), ayahs 39-41)

History tells us that the companions of the messenger of Allah entered the lands with their good conduct and honest dealings before they conquered them with their swords, armaments and numbers. For, it is inconceivable that a small number of Arabs could subvert the throne of Kisra (Persia), flatten the kingdom of Rome and inherit the world after these huge civilisations, in the short while that they did. It is unimaginable that eight thousand soldiers could conquer a vast region the size of Egypt, and spread their religion, culture and

belief with force and imposition. It is through kind discourse and beautiful treatment that they were able to achieve what they had achieved. From this it can been seen why peoples used to crave for the return of the Muslims after they had left, so how can it be said that Islam was founded on the sword or spread by it.

2) It is also refuted by the verses in the Holy Qur'an that affirm freedom of conviction by saying in all clarity and honesty:

'There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in the tyranny and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allah is the All-Hearer, All-Knower.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 256)

He Also says:

'And say: "the truth is from your Lord.", then whosoever wills, let him believe, and whosoever wills let him disbelieve.'

(Surat-al-Kahf (18), ayah 29)

Allah also says:

And if anyone of the disbelievers seeks your protection, so that they hear the Word of Allah, then escort him to where he can be secure, that is because they are men who know not.'

(Surat-at-Tauba(9), ayah 6)

These verses bind the believers such that if anyone among the disbelievers asks them for clarification they must explain the message and simplify the objectives of Islam to him, then protect him till he reaches his place of security, and leave him to reach a decision through personal conviction and not through fear and compulsion.

3) It is false because the pillars of Islam and what was practised in accordance with them refutes it in the strongest possible terms. For the basis of belief in Islam is rationality, contemplation and deep conviction:

'The Bedouins say: "We believe." Say: "You believe not but only say, 'We have surrendered (to Islam),' for faith has not yet entered your hearts'

(Surah Al-Hujuraat (49), ayah 14)

And the cause of responsibility in Islam is that the message is heard in such a way that it deserves consideration, hence refusing it would mean the denial of the well contemplated message of Allah. And that imitation is not a good grounds for Imaan (faith), let alone compulsion. Some contemporary scholars have said in this regards:

'Verily, everyone who imitates on matters of belief

His faith is not without hesitation.'

Also, in Islam, the words of the one under pressure or threat are rejected and he will not be accountable for his actions. Thus, the religion which considers the sound mind and freedom of choice as the bedrock of belief and responsibility can not be said to have been established or expanded by the sword; even though it has permitted fighting for the purposes mentioned earlier. The sign of true belief is confidence in it:

'Those who believe, and whose hearts rest in the remembrance of Allah. Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts not find rest? Those who believe and work righteousness, all kinds of happiness is for them and a beautiful place of final return.'

(Al-Ra'd (13), ayahs 28-29).

Is Islam Unique in Calling for the Use of the Sword in the Protection of the Truth?

Islam is not alone in resorting to war and fighting as a means for safeguarding the truth. In fact, all past and present laws came with a similar principle.

The Books of the Old Testament which are referred to by the Jews today are filled with statements on war, struggle, fighting, destruction, devastation, ruin and hostage taking; thus affirming the legality of war but in its most reckless form, for in Deuteronomy, book 20, verses 10 and above: 'When you come near to a city to fight, call for peace; if it responds to your call for peace and opens its doors in front of you then all its people will be under your command and all will be your slaves. If it does not heed to your demands for peace then besiege it, and if your Lord God pushes it to you then strike all its males with the edge of your sword. As for the women, children, and beast and all that is in the city, they are all a booty for you. And eat the booty, of your enemy, which your Lord has given you. Such should you do to all those cities that are very far from you and those cities that are not the cities of those nations. As for the cities of those peoples which your Lord God gives unto you do not leave a soul in it-the Hannites, the Amorite, the Ankanites, Fayarazites, Yousite, like your Lord has ordered you.'

In Gospel Matthew in the tenth book, verses 25 and onwards: 'Think not that I have come to spread peace in the land, but the sword. For, I have come to separate a man from his son, and the son from his father and the daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law... and the animosity of the person with his household, whoever loves a son or a daughter more than I will not deserve me, and whosoever does not take his cross and follow me also does not deserve me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find me.'

Modern international law has also admitted to certain circumstances under which war becomes legal and laid down laws and regulations for it.

The Islamic rules regarding this issue are finer, more detailed, more merciful, and more just than all this and even lead to peace:

'Indeed , there has come to you from Allah a light and a plain Book. Wherewith Allah guides all those who seek His Good Pleasure to ways of peace, and He brings them out of darkness by His will unto light and guides them to a Straight Way.'

(Surat-al-Maa'idah (5), ayah 16)

Positive Steps by Islam, and What it Has Laid Down in Terms of Guarantees for the Establishment of Peace

After all that we have mentioned, it is very easy to say that Islam was the most comprehensive legislative system that had taken steps in the path of establishing peace. Islam drew for stability the most genuine guarantees, if adopted by the countries of the world, and followed by the rulers, leaders and politicians the world would then rest and save the agonies of war. Among these regulations and guarantees:

1- The sanctity of the meanings of brotherhood and the overcoming of the spirit of racism and rigidity; on this, much has been said in the last section.

2- The training of the souls on the spirit of forgiveness. At the beginning of this section the position of Islam regarding this point was presented; virtues like the absolute necessity for trustworthiness, and the prohibition of subversion and the dishonouring of treaties and agreements.

3- The restriction of the idea of war into the smallest possible boundaries, forbidding transgression in all its manifestations, and the dominance of the principles of justice, compassion, and the respect of law and order even at the time of war itself. In this respect Islam has the high ground. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

'O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah and be just witnesses and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety,

and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Well-acquainted with what you do.'

(Al-Maa'idah (5), ayah 8)

4- Arms control, and again Islam has superseded all contemporary measures in this regard when the All-Mighty said:

'And if two parties of the believers fall into fighting , then make peace between them both, but if one of them rebels against the other, then fight you (all) against that which rebels till it complies with the command of Allah; then if it complies, then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable. Verily! Allah loves those who are equitable.'

(Surat-al-Hujuraat (49), ayah 9)

The Prophet (PBUH.) spoke about the treaty of *Fudool,* that regulated the military actions before Islam, in the kindest of terms (this was a treaty conducted before Islam) when he said:

'I witnessed, in the home of Abdullah Ibn Jadaan, a treaty that is more beloved to me than red camels.'

Then he said:

'And if I was invited to it during Islam, I would have agreed.'

Where do the leaders of this age stand in realisation of these steps?

What is the position of the leaders, politicians, scholars, lawyers and philosophers of this age in relation to these measures. And what have they done to restore peace on earth after the world has, in less than a quarter of century, witnessed two devastating world wars that have destroyed the green and the dry? After the first of which the 'League of Nations' was established to install peace but, it was destined to die before it was born due to its inability to solve even one case of disagreement between the nations that joined it and signed its treaties; it was only a moment of time before these countries and nations started preparing for war yet again to fulfil their political and imperialistic desires. It was said that the reason for its failure was the lack of a military sanction for the wrong-doer.

Subsequent to the last war the 'United Nations' was founded and the Security Council was established. However differences and disagreements are still intensifying and gaining momentum. Neither the U.N. nor the security council, till now, have been able to resolve one dispute or untangle a disagreement. I fear, that nothing will remain except a Third World War.

So why does the bewildered humanity not return to its creator and learn the lessons of peace, intellectually, theoretically and practically from Islam? *'Say praise be to Allah and peace be upon His chosen servants. Is God not far more supreme than that with which they associate ?'.*
